

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman yielding me this time, and I applaud the sponsors, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. Tancredo), the distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, the gentleman from California (Mr. Royce), and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Payne) for bringing this forward.

In a sense, it is bittersweet that we have to do this because of the continuing crisis in Sudan, but the fact is that this Congress has been moving forward and shining the spotlight. This is another step towards making a difference, helping provide safe haven for hundreds of thousands of innocent people. As the world proceeds with words of concern, the people of Darfur continue to suffer at the hands of the Sudanese government and their militia allies because good words are not a sufficient substitute for appropriate action.

I appreciate the commitment we have here in Congress to do something, to take action. I view this resolution as the next step in moving us along that path.

It authorizes desperately needed humanitarian aid for over 1.5 million people forced from their homes. It includes both a carrot and a stick. It gives aid to Sudan if the government finishes the north-south peace process, begins to protect civilians and disarm the militia, and provides for sanction against senior government officials if they do not. Time will tell whether or not we have hit the right balance.

I appreciate the gentleman from California (Mr. Royce) talking about the role of the United Nations and the work we need to do there. It is an important issue for us as Members of Congress, because this is one of the areas, frankly, that I felt even in the fall when there was a lot of partisan passions, there were legitimate disagreements on areas of policy from Members, but this is an area where our shared values as Americans were more important than any partisan differences.

I remember the evening of our last resolution where Members came together in this Chamber, and it made me feel that maybe we would be able to take that step forward. I appreciate this resolution as being a part of the process, but I would offer the question for my colleagues if maybe we might take another small step. I have been in consultation with some of my colleagues like the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Payne), the gentleman from California (Mr. Royce) and others, about whether or not we might resolve as a Congress that in the next session we would make a priority to take one small step, that each Member in the 109th Congress be able to visit the Sudan, to be able to spend a night on the ground in Darfur, and as we leave that country to stop off in Khartoum and let the government of Sudan know that their behavior is reprehensible and the spotlight of the world is trained upon them.

If we as Members go to our leadership in the spirit of bipartisan cooperation that this resolution has been authored, with the leadership of our International Relations Committee, and ask that the leadership, the Speaker, the minority leader, the majority leader, join with us in making sure that there are a series of CODELs over the next 2 years, I would respectfully suggest that there is no man or woman that serves in this Chamber that cannot find 4 days out of their lives in the next 2 years that could result in the saving of tens of thousands of lives.

I have received feedback from people in the NGO community that are doing outstanding work; they say if every Member of Congress would go to the Sudan over the next 2 years, that it would have a transformational effect, even if we had only 50 or 60 of our colleagues. So by all means, approve this resolution, stand, speak out, move forward; but I would ask that my colleagues join me in making a visit on the ground to be a priority for us all. This small gesture can save tens of thousands of lives.